Letter from the editors

Peter James Bentley & Carroll Graham

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Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the first journal issue of 2020. We have a special treat for our readers in this issue, with an editorial essay reviewing the development and content of the journal during its fourth decade (2009 to 2018). While this is a somewhat belated 40th birthday celebration for the journal, we are sure that the delayed gratification will make our review even more greatly appreciated by our readership. More practically, it does take time to review and savour a decade’s worth of articles.

Before getting to the decade under review, we do have our regular range of interesting and relevant articles which have developed, improved and survived our journal’s thorough peer review process. A strong student focus is evident in these six articles; appropriate given the start of the southern hemisphere academic year.

First, we have Ian Li and David Carroll’s article whose title ‘Factors influencing dropout and academic performance: an Australian higher education equity perspective’ aptly describes its content, with very clear policy implications. Also, a warm welcome to Ian Li to our Editorial Board in 2020!

The same clarity is found in the title of our second article by Cheng and Chan from Hong Kong, ‘Do university residential experiences contribute to holistic education?’. Of course the answer is not simply ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

Student plagiarism will remain a hot topic on the policy agenda this year in Australia. Most of the focus will be on students, but De Maio, Dixon and Yeo examine how staff respond to potential plagiarism incidents and the disconnect with institutional policy.

What are universities for? Guzmán-Valenzuela, Barnett and Labraña open their article with this broad question, then wisely shift their attention to the specifics of their public purpose. It is a truly thought-provoking examination of marketisation in Chile, with much wider implications.

China offers a completely different context and approach for maintaining the public role of universities. Xu Liu’s article examines the institutional governance of Chinese private universities, specifically the role of the Communist Party Committee in controlling their socialist development.

We round out our articles with Karen Nichols’ study of academic leaders’ understandings of language development and how students’ language development can be supported by institutional practices.

Finally, we have a book review by Fengliang Li for the Handbook on the politics of higher education, edited by Brendan Cantwell, Hamish Coates and Roger King.
As always, we hope you enjoy reading the articles in this issue.

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